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ABSTRACT

One of a series of Australian publications on social studies skill development, this booklet introduces secondary students to survey techniques and their applications for gathering data in the school and community. Following an introduction, material is divided into eight chapters. Topics covered are the nature and stages of a social survey, techniques of data collection and analysis, the advantages and disadvantages of different data-gathering techniques, and hints for conducting an effective social survey. A final chapter lists social science survey projects conducted by Australian secondary schools between 1975 and 1976. A list of resources concludes the publication. (LP)

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social survey

Social Science Skills Book 3

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Foreword

Although the nature of social science courses and social science teaching in Australia has changed significantly over the past decade, there still remains a rather undue emphasis on the teaching of factual information. This has generally been to the detriment of the achievement of other social science aims and objectives. More recently, however, there has emerged a growing concern for the achievement of these other aims such as the development of skills, and the growth of positive attitudes and values.

In recognition of this, the Curriculum Development Centre is publishing a series of booklets to assist teachers in the area of skill development. The booklets are practical and provide background to specific skill areas, guidelines for programs to develop such skills, and a wide range of student activities which can be readily incorporated into existing programs.

The titles in the series are as follows:

1 **Teaching Social Science Skills**
This provides teachers with a broad introduction to the area of skills development and the implications for classroom teaching.

2 **Finding the Facts**
A booklet designed to provide students with skills relating to data collection through the use of the library, media, and the local community.

3 **Social Survey**
As the title suggests, this booklet shows students how to use survey techniques and explains their contribution to gathering data in the school and community.

4 **Presenting Information**
This booklet outlines to students different methods for getting the message to the audience.

5 **Assessment and Evaluation**
This provides teachers with a simple introduction to assessment and evaluation in the social sciences.

6 **Working in Groups**
This booklet provides teachers with guidelines for effective organisation of students groups in the classroom.

We believe that these materials have a much wider learning and teaching application than the series title nominates. Indeed, it will be surprising if the booklets do not become an essential resource in teacher development activities.

Their appearance is timely and they will, we are sure, be well received.

DAVID FRANCIS
Acting Director

OPINION POLL
IS IT OKAY IF IT'S JUST A HUMBLE OPINION?
THAVLS

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ntroduction

very time we ask questions such as 'Who decides where new schools should be built?', Why do so many people drive cars rather than use public transport?', or 'What do kids in her suburbs do during the weekend?', we are asking a **social** question.
ometimes we can easily find answers to our questions, sometimes we don't bother to try, t at other times we might really want to follow up our question in detail.

nce we have asked a social question the next problem is to work out ways of answering We could:
- discuss it in a group
- find out what has been written about the topic
- conduct our own **social research**

this booklet we look at several different ways in which we can go about doing social search, including:
- some of the ways we can gather information (or social data)
- several different ways by which we can make sense of (or analyse) information
- some of the problems we have to face when deciding how to gather and analyse formation

what is a social survey?*

Whenever we begin to find out how people behave, what opinions people have, or what people say, we are conducting a **social survey**.

The term 'social survey' may seem new but you have taken part in many surveys of this type. For example, on your first day at this school you were probably asked such things as your age, home address, religion, and previous school. This was a very simple survey. Yet it contained two of the features found in all social surveys.

- A set of information about a particular group of people was collected.
- This information was put to some use (in this case the planning of your schooling).

Social surveys are not limited to collecting personal details, although this is a very important use. You may not have thought about it before, but all the things listed below are determined by social survey methods.

- The ratings of the local radio stations.
- How much we spend on food and drink.
- Where we are likely to travel while on holiday.
- The colours new cars should be painted.
- The way we are likely to vote.

* Adapted from **Finding Out** Social Education Materials Project.

THAVES
OPINION
POLL
...UH...LET'S JUST SKIP THE QUESTION ABOUT GUN CONTROL, AND START RIGHT OUT WITH THE ONE ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY, IF THAT'S OKAY WITH YOU GUYS...

a social survey in action

The problem

Students at a suburban secondary school had great difficulty in finding a place where they could park their bikes. There were too few spaces in existing bike racks and many bikes had to be parked on the road side, on lawns, and in bush areas. On a normal day bikes were scattered all over the school grounds. The situation seemed to be getting worse. More and more students had bikes and brought them to the school but no new bike racks were built.

A small group of students decided to do something about this. They could have gone direct to the Principal and complained, but he was already well aware of their difficulties. It therefore seemed much more sensible to go to him only after they had collected information on student parking. This might show how serious the problem was and, more importantly, how many new parking spaces were needed.

But this raised another problem. If the information was to be of any value in planning a solution to the problem, it had to be detailed and accurate.

As a result, students spent a lot of time working out just what information they should collect and how they should collect it.

What to do

Their greatest need was to find out who brought a bike to school and therefore needed a parking space. But what was the best way to do this? There were nearly 1 000 students and it was impossible to interview them all. Thus a survey was made of only a third of the students. These were carefully selected so that they were as alike as possible to the two-thirds who were not to be surveyed. This meant that over 300 students still had to be contacted. Rather than interview them, it was decided to give them a questionnaire which they could fill in and return in their own time.
The questionnaire was very simple.

Bicycle survey

Class 7B is trying to find out how the school might solve its bicycle parking problem. The results of this survey could help **you**, so please help us by filling in the questionnaire below.

(A) If you brought a bicycle to school last week, please show all the days you did this by ticking the appropriate time-slots in the table below.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

(B) If you have any suggestions to make about solving the bicycle parking problem at this school, please write them in the space below.

_____

_____

Thank you for your help.

Working with the information

When the questionnaires were returned they were sorted into three groups:

1 a group containing replies from students who brought a bike to school last week
2 a group containing replies from students who did not own a bike, but made some suggestions on parking
3 blank forms (not everyone fills in forms!)

Each group was carefully counted. The percentage in each was worked out, and this was recorded.
For replies in group 1:

- For each day of the week the number of students who brought bikes to school was counted and recorded. These figures were compared with the number of bike-racks available.
- Then the questionnaires from Group 1 were sorted again. Those with suggestions on parking were added to group 2.

For replies in group 2:
Many different suggestions were made. Those which were similar were grouped together; i.e. the replies were **categorised**. The number of replies in each category were counted and expressed as a percentage. For example 15% of the students who made suggestions said that students should take turns to use the bike racks.

The results

All this information was then put into a written report which contained the major results of the survey.

The survey showed up two very significant but quite unexpected facts. First, seventeen out of every twenty students (85%) regularly brought their bikes to the school. Second, at certain times during the week, 70% wanted a bicycle parking space. There was room in the existing bike racks for only 40%!

Using the results

When this information was given to the Principal, he was able to see immediately that the parking problem was very serious indeed. As a result, he had several new bike racks built. The parking problem no longer exists, at least for the moment.

Although this example was successful, it is most important that you understand that social surveys are not always so successful. Only too often surveys show that very serious problems exist but nothing is done.

The stages that Class 7b went through in carrying out their social survey are outlined on page 10.

Find out any information you can about Gallup Poll, McNair-Anderson Survey, and The Age Poll.
What do they have in common?

the main stages in a social survey

SOME KEY TERMS		FOR EXAMPLE
Problem Identification	WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?	• Not enough bike parking space.
	ARE WE GOING TO EXAMINE IT?	
Research Planning	WHAT INFORMATION DO WE NEED TO KNOW?	• How many students ride bikes to school? • What are the students ideas for solving the problem?
Data Collection	WHERE OR FROM WHOM WILL WE GET THE INFORMATION?	• Students
	WHAT METHODS ARE WE GOING TO USE TO FIND THIS INFORMATION?	• Questionnaire
	HOW CAN WE MAKE SURE THAT THE INFORMATION IS ACCURATE?	
Data Analysis	WHAT HAVE WE FOUND OUT?	• A lot of students have trouble parking their bikes. • There are a lot of good ideas for solving the problem.
	WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN OUR FINDINGS?	• The Principal, staff, other students.
Presentation of Results	HOW CAN WE BEST PRESENT OUR FINDINGS?	• Tables and a written report.
Social Action	WHAT USE ARE WE GOING TO MAKE OF OUR RESEARCH?	• To convince the Principal that something needs to be done about the problem.

CAN YOU LIST ANY ISSUES OR PROBLEMS IN YOUR LOCAL AREA THAT MIGHT BE SOLVED IN THIS WAY?

observation —
a technique for data collection

Observation is one of the most useful tools available to us for finding out about the world we live in. In the story 'Tuesday ..', a number of people used observation skills to make guesses about the feelings and behaviour of others.

Tuesday ...

'Smithy's in a bad mood this afternoon' said Dave as the class lined up outside Room 5. 'How can you tell?' asked Louise. 'Take a look at the way he's walking down the corridor, and see his face! He looks like Boris Karloff!' 'Maybe Mrs Rumbold has been criticising his teaching again', suggested Max.

As the class entered the room Mr Smith cast a glance at the tables and chairs which were arranged in a horseshoe shape. 'Humph! Looks like McDonald's Human Relations class has been in here again', he mumbled, just loudly enough for the nearest students to hear. Then he said quite loudly, 'Those year eight students have the habits of wild animals! Look at the state of this room! Will somebody **please** pick up some of those papers on the floor?'

Later that day Louise closed the kitchen door behind her and collapsed into a chair. Tuesdays were always hard going, and Smithy's bad mood hadn't helped. Now it looked as if Frank had beaten her home. The remains of a loaf of bread, a honey-smeared knife, and a packet of butter lay on the table, while a flickering blue reflection in the sliding glass door that leads into the lounge, told her that the TV had been left on.

Louise wonder if Auntie Marge had come for lunch that day as she had promised. The large pile of dishes draining on the sink suggested that there may have been another guest or two as well. A parcel wrapped in brown paper and lying on the chair near the stove gave Louise the clue she was looking for. 'Uncle Bob must have been here as well' she thought 'and he brought me the books he promised!' Suddenly Tuesday didn't seem so bad.

Read the story and complete the following table:

Dave

Using this information ..	.. Guessed that
The way Mr Smith walked	

and **Max**

	... Guessed that

Mr Smith

Using this information ..	... Guessed that Mr McDonald was the last teacher to use the room, and ...

Louise

Using this information ..	... Guessed that
Using this information ..	... Guessed that
Using this information	... Guessed that

We all use observation every day of our lives to find out about our world. In fact it is probably the most usual method of information-gathering. However, through practise and training it is possible for us to become better observers. If we become better observers, the information which we collect will be more accurate, more reliable, and therefore more useful.

What is observation

1 When social scientists use the term 'observation', they are referring to the gathering of information by observing and recording details of an event **as it actually happens**.

2 Observation differs from the use of questionnaires or interviews where people tell you what they believe or feel about something. Observation provides information about **what people actually do** — how they behave.

3 This means that the information gathered by observation may be different from that gathered by interview and questionnaire. For example, a survey using questionnaires or interviews might produce information which shows that 75% of the people surveyed believe that road traffic speed limits are too high. But a survey of those same people using observation might show that 60% of them regularly exceed the speed limit.

Later in this book you will be able to find out more about the differences between observation and other data-gathering techniques. The most important thing to remember is that observation means watching human behaviour to find out **what people actually do**.

It is not enough, however, just to watch human behaviour. If the information gathered is to be useful it must be recorded carefully in some way. Remember, the data gathered by social scientists is always used for a purpose — usually to find the answer to a question or problem. This purpose can only be achieved if the information has been accurately and systematically recorded.

How can observations be recorded?

The information gathered through observation may be recorded in a number of ways — for example:
— electronic equipment; video tape or film cameras, tape-recorders
— tally sheets; a list of categories which are ticked, numbered, or marked in some way by the observer
— written records; a ship's log, diary, a collection of letters

Later in this book we will look at recording information in more detail.

How have the following people recorded their observations:
Captain Cook, Sir Joseph Banks, Damien Parer, the Leyland brothers, Alistair Cooke?

Is all the observation the same?

There are different kinds of observation. Some observation is unplanned and casual, while some is carefully planned and carefully conducted. The observation which took place in the story 'Tuesday ..' was of the first kind — unplanned and casual. Social scientists, however, are mainly concerned with the second kind of observation — that which is carefully planned and carefully carried out.

Even within planned observation, social scientists have noticed important differences. Planned observation may be:

1 COVERT (unknown) or OVERT (known)

2 PARTICIPANT or NON-PARTICIPANT

1 Covert or Overt?

Covert observation simply means that the people who are being observed do not know about it. Later on, after the observation is over, the observer may choose to tell the people what has happened and ask their permission to use the information gathered. When **overt** observation is used, the people who are being observed know what is happening, and their permission has probably been obtained.

2 Participant or Non-participant?

Participant observation means that the person who is observing is a part of the group being observed. The observer takes part in the activities of the group while observing the behaviour of the people in it. A **non-participant** observer stands apart from the group which is being observed.
Therefore observation may be

1 PARTICIPANT — OVERT
2 PARTICIPANT — COVERT
3 NON-PARTICIPANT — OVERT
4 NON-PARTICIPANT — COVERT

For example:

- A hidden observer watching whether or not pedestrians cross a busy street at a pedestrian crossing ... is an example of ...
  NON-PARTICIPANT — COVERT OBSERVATION
- An observer who openly takes notes about the behaviour of the members of a cricket team to which he belongs ..... is an example of ....
  PARTICIPANT — OVERT OBSERVATION
- If the team members did not know that observation was taking place, this would be ....
  PARTICIPANT — COVERT OBSERVATION
- An observer who recorded behaviour of children in a kindergarten by watching them as they played would be carrying out ...
  NON-PARTICIPANT — COVERT OBSERVATION
- If the children knew what the observer was doing ... this would be ...
  NON-PARTICIPANT — OVERT OBSERVATION

How would you feel if you found out that someone had been observing you and taking notes whilst you were at school all day?

Choosing a method of observation

Choosing between the different types of observation will be easier if you know some of the advantages and disadvantages of each of them.

Covert observation does have one big advantage; because people do not know they are being observed, they may be more likely to behave just as usual. Sometimes people 'put on an act' if they think they are being watched.

It is important that the behaviour which the social scientist is observing is normal for the people concerned; if it is not, the data collected may be inaccurate.

However, sometimes people may become angry when they find out that their behaviour has been secretly observed. This may cause them to refuse the social scientist permission to use the data which has been collected. In addition, some social scientists believe that it is wrong to observe people covertly because everyone has a right to privacy. These social scientists say that observation should always be overt, even if this sometimes affects the accuracy of results. What do you think?

Making a choice between **participant** and **non-participant** observation may not be quite as difficult. Ask yourself these questions:

1 Would I be able to obtain more accurate and useful information if I were an active member of the group of people which I am going to observe?

2 Do I have enough time to take part both in the group's actions **and** collect and record information?

3 Will the group accept me as a member **and** as a participant-observer?

4 Am I good enough at the skills of observation to gather information **objectively** about people whom I know well?

The first of these questions is the most important, as participant observation is difficult and time-consuming. Make sure that you really have something to **gain** by choosing to be a participant observer. Of course you may have no choice, as you may already be a member of the group. If this is the case, the other questions are still important.

GETTING READY FOR OBSERVATION

As shown earlier there are a number of steps involved in carrying out a social survey. When using observation to collect information planning is essential. The steps outlined below assume that:

- You have already decided to gather information to answer a question or solve a problem.
- You have already decided to use a particular type of observation.

In other words you have decided what your objectives and methods are. In this case the objective was to examine the number of young people (under twenty years of age) using different types of slot machines at a shopping centre.

- What type of observation was used in the example?

Steps	Example	Notes
Step 1 **Define the Behaviour** **What** exactly am I looking for? **Who** am I going to observe?	The number of people using various slot machines. Males below the age of 20. Females below the age of 20.	• Have you been specific enough? Will it be easy for an observer to decide if the behaviour is taking place? Will it be easy to decide if a person fits in this category of people? (e.g. how can you accurately tell a person's age?)
Step 2 **Define the Situation** **Where?** **When?**	Box Hill Shopping Plaza, Centre Mall, Saturday 14 March, 9.00am- Friday 20 March, 6.00pm	• Is the situation which you have chosen suitable? Are you likely to observe the people and the behaviour in which you are interested? Do you need to ask permission from anybody? Can the observers get to the place easily, or will transport have to be arranged?
Step 3 **Prepare Tally Sheets**	Date **14/3/82** Time **9.30-10.00** Name of Observer: **Debbie**	• Have you allowed enough space for tally mark and total? Have you prepared enough sheets?
Step 4 **Set Tasks** Who will do what tasks? Who will relieve observers? Who will co-ordinate the operation?* Can the co-ordinator be easily contacted?	Observation Roster	• It is a good idea to roster observers in pairs, so that they can help each other.

Name of Machine		Number	Total
War Game	M	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 II	12
	F		
Hot Rod	M	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	
500	F	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	20
Space	M	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	10
Invaders	F		
Shazam!	M	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 III	8
	F		
Star Wars	M		
	F		
Galaxians	M		
	F		

Saturday a.m.		Friday p.m.
9.00- 9.30	Frank/Debbie	7.00-7.30*
9.30-10.00	Debbie/Joyce	6.30-7.00
10.00-10.30	Joyce/Doug	6.00-6.30

*Obviously your teacher cannot be in more than one place at the same time. If the survey is being carried out in more than one place e.g. two or three shopping centres, someone should be appointed as a co-ordinator.

*Be fair, if there are several sessions of observation, rotate the shifts, so the same people are not rostered for the same time each day.

Conducting the observation

Although it might sound simple to conduct a social survey and that all that is needed is common sense, to do it well you need to organize your observation session, arrange the best possible working conditions, and sort out your equipment needs.

The lists of duties provided below can guide you in conducting your survey as effectively as possible in order to obtain reliable and useful results.

If you are a co-ordinator, you should:

- Make sure that all observers understand the task and its purposes.
- Make sure that each pair of observers has two tally sheets (one for emergencies), a clipboard to rest the sheets on, and pens or pencils.
- Make sure that observers know the times when they are rostered.
- Make sure that observers have arrived before each session.
- Contact emergencies if they are needed.
- Handle any problems or queries if they arise.
- Collect tally sheets, clip boards, and pens at the end of each session.

If you are an observer, you should:

- Arrive at least ten minutes before the scheduled time to make sure that you fully understand the task.
- Collect the tally sheets, clipboard, and pen from the co-ordinator.
- Fill in the necessary information on the top of their tally sheet.
- Take up your position on time.
- Place a tally mark in the appropriate space on the tally sheet as each activity is observed.
- At the end of the time add up the tally marks in each space and write the totals in the spaces provided.
- Hand the tally sheets, clipboards and pens to the co-ordinator.

Some Do's and Don'ts

DO

Check that you have all the equipment you need.

Record patiently, accurately, and honestly everything that is observed.

Keep your mind on the job.

Carefully work out your time for observation.

Make sure, when working in pairs, each of you has a copy of the data.

Try, when observing people, to stay in the background.

DON'T

Think that one pencil or biro will do.

Rely on your memory to write some things down later.

Be distracted by helpful friends.

Undertake hasty, poorly planned observations.

Take risks in collecting data.

the questionnaire —
a technique for data collection

Have you ever been in a situation where you have identified a problem and wanted to do something about it, but found that you couldn't until you had gathered the facts and obtained the opinions of other people?
Here is an example that may be familiar to you ...

- In this particular school, many students were concerned that they were required to wear a uniform. The Students' Representative Council recommended to the Principal of the school that uniforms be abolished. When the Students' Council claimed that 'most schools in the area had abolished uniforms, and that most students today preferred not to wear uniforms' the Principal disagreed. A students' committee was set up to investigate the claims made by the Council. The questionnaire was drawn up and conducted with forty students in each of the five local schools.

QUESTIONNAIRE: COMPULSORY SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Interviewer ..... Date .....

Section 1: Does your school have a school uniform?

YES	NO

Section 2: (For those answering YES to Question 1)

To which of the following year levels is the uniform compulsory?

YEAR	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
	11	
	12	

Section 3: (For those answering NO to Question 1)

Did your school ever have a school uniform in the past?

YES	NO

Section 4: Do you think schools should have school uniforms?

YES	NO

Section 5: (For those answering YES to Question 4)

Why should schools have school uniforms? .....

.....

Section 6: (For those answering NO to Question 4)

Why should schools not have school uniforms? .....

.....

Section 7: What year are you in?

YEAR

7		10	
8		11	
9		12	

Section 8: Name of your school? .....

Constructing a questionnaire

Once you have decided on the topic of your questionnaire (the data that you need to answer your question or problem) you will then need to decide:

What do I really want to know?
What questions do I need to ask?

Who would be the best people to question?
How many people do I need to question?
What type of questionnaire will I use?

The most important thing to remember when making up a questionnaire is that the quality of the results depends on the quality of the questions asked.

This checklist should help you make up a successful questionnaire.

- **Is the question written in simple language?**
- **Is the question easy to follow?**
- **Is its meaning quite clear?**
- **Are the questions arranged in a logical order?**
- **Have I asked a vague or ambiguous question?**
- **Have I asked a leading question?**
- **Have I asked an embarrassing question?**
- **Have I asked too many (or too few) questions?**
- **Have I set out the questionnaire so that the answers can be easily recorded?**

Before you make copies of your questionnaire, try out your questions on three or four people. This will show up the faults in your questions before you start your survey. The name used by social scientists for this trial of your questions is called a **pilot survey**.

Giving the questionnaire

Most people will probably be willing to help you with your research but they are not likely to be as interested in the survey as you are. They often have a great many other things to do.

It is therefore important when giving your questionnaire to:

- Introduce yourself.
- Explain the purpose of the survey to the respondent.
- Politely ask the person if he or she would be willing to answer a few questions.
- Take up as little of the respondent's time as possible.
- Be pleasant and courteous.
- Ask the questions clearly — speak slowly.
- Always ask questions in the same order.

The results?

When you have collected the information you will have to decide:

- How can I make sense of the data I've collected?
- How can I present my findings to other people?

What is a questionnaire?

You can see from the example given that a questionnaire consists of a prepared set of questions on a sheet of paper which seek facts and opinions on a topic which is being examined. In other words, it is a list of pre-planned questions which you want people to answer. A space is left next to each question where the answer can be written down. Thus a questionnaire is both a question and answer sheet. This makes the collection and analysis of information very easy.

If you have already been involved in social surveys, you will probably know that the questionnaire is a widely used method of data gathering which can be used to collect information on a wide variety of topics, and may be given to large numbers of people at the same time.

What can questionnaires find out?

Many organizations and individuals use questionnaires to find out about people, their activities, their needs, their wants, their opinions, and their attitudes. Consider the following cases:

- Which way people are likely to vote in elections — political surveys or polls.
- How much people spend on food, clothing and shelter — cost of living surveys.
- How people travel from home to work — transport surveys.
- What services or amenities people would like to have provided in their community — town planning surveys

What other kinds of surveys can you think of?

Here are some examples of things that you could find out by using a questionnaire.

- What students at your school think about local entertainment or sporting amenities.
- Why people shop (or do not shop) at large suburban shopping centres.
- What schools were like in your grandparents' days.
- What pets are owned by the people in your street.
- How many people approve or disapprove of building a new car park next to the local railway station or shopping centre.
- What television programs are popular with the students in your class.

Words You Need

Surveyor — the interviewer or person who conducts the survey.

Respondent — the person who answers the questions asked in an interview or questionnaire.

Response — the answers given in an interview or questionnaire.

Co-ordinator — the person or persons in charge of organising a survey.

Valid — how well a survey measures what it claims to be measuring.

Are all questionnaires the same?

All questionnaires involve asking questions, but they differ according to the types of questions that they ask and the way in which the questionnaire is given.

For instance, you have to decide whether to use a questionnaire that is:

structured or unstructured

These two types of questionnaire differ in the kind of questions asked and the form of the responses or answers given.

For example, in a structured questionnaire you ask:

Closed Questions

1 Have you ever been overseas?

YES	
NO	

2 Do you think students should have to wear school uniform?

YES	
NO	

Multiple-Choice Questions

1 Do you spend holidays away from your parents?

ALWAYS ☐
OCCASIONALLY ☐
NEVER ☐

2 School uniform should be abolished at this school.

AGREE STRONGLY ☐
AGREE ☐
DISAGREE ☐
DISAGREE STRONGLY ☐
UNDECIDED ☐

These questions require the respondents to choose between alternative answers. This means that you set out the question answer sheet in such a way as to structure, or limit, the form of the answers people give to the questions.

In an **unstructured questionnaire** you ask:

Open-Ended Questions

1 Do you think school uniforms should be compulsory? .....
2 Do you always go on holidays with your parents? .....
3 What do you think of pop music today? .....
4 When elections are held in Australia, who do you think should vote? .....

These questions allow the respondents to express an opinion in their own way. The format of the responses is unstructured.

Another decision you will have to make is whether to use a questionnaire that is:—

read and filled in by the people being surveyed (the respondents)	OR	filled in by the surveyor (or interviewer) who asks the questions. This type of questionnaire is similar to a formal or structured interview. It is sometimes called an **interview schedule**.

interviewing —
a technique for data collection

Have you ever been interviewed?

That is, has someone arranged a time and place to ask you a series of questions about yourself, your opinions, or your behaviour, and given you the chance to talk about yourself?

If your answer is no, one of the first chances you might have to be interviewed is when you apply for a job.

Ask your friends and see if you know anyone who has been interviewed (carry out a small social survey!). Find out from them what it is like.

Another way of finding out what an interview is like is to watch or listen to programs such as the evening News, 'Sixty Minutes' or 'A Current Affair' where television and radio reporters often conduct interviews.

In this section we look at the interview as a social science technique for gathering data.

What will you be doing if you interview someone?

You are using the technique of interviewing when you encourage people to talk about themselves by asking them a series of questions.

It means
- There is something you want to find out. You have some questions to ask.
- You believe you can find answers to your questions by talking to people.
- You will record the person's answers to your questions.

'... after doing these I am better able to cope with talking to people and am able to appreciate older people's ideas and views of life. I also think I have learnt to be diplomatic ...'

'Sometimes while I was interviewing people, I could just sort of see them visualising the scene they were telling us about, and I think a lot of people enjoyed this.'

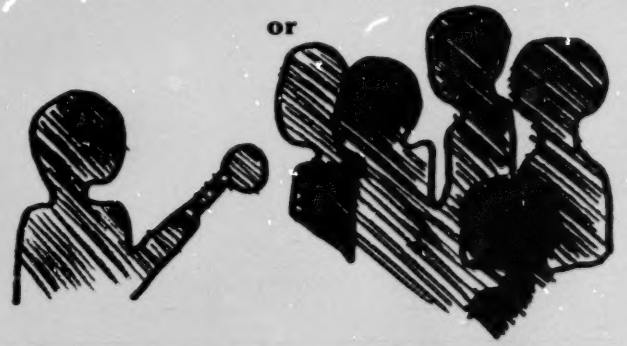
Usually there are two people involved in an interview:

An **interviewer** and a **respondent**.

Although sometimes there are more

An **interviewing panel** and a **respondent**.

or



An **interviewer** and a **group of respondents**.

Becoming a successful interviewer

1 Before you start interviewing you will need to decide

- What do I really want to know? What questions do I need to ask?

Main question?

relevance

sub-questions

comprehension

personal privacy???

- **Who** would be the best people to interview? **How many** people should I interview?

Local aldermen shoppers Retailers .....

Young children

One person .... Priest

a lot of elderly people female

- **Where** would be the best place to conduct my interviews?

On the street .. In the shopping centre

In a 'bare' room ....

People's homes

- How can I keep a record of what people are saying?

Memory

Written down

Tape recorder

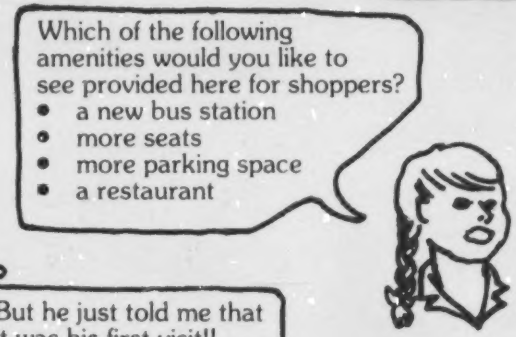
'We had 4x55 minute periods per week and this created some problems with transport as the school is about quarter hour's walk from town. Our teacher got angry when we were late back to school.'

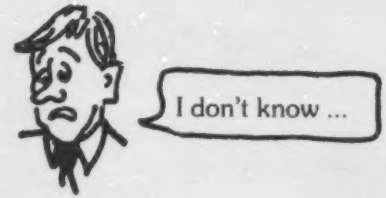
Carmel, Form 4,
Rutherglen High

2 During the interview you will need to ask yourself

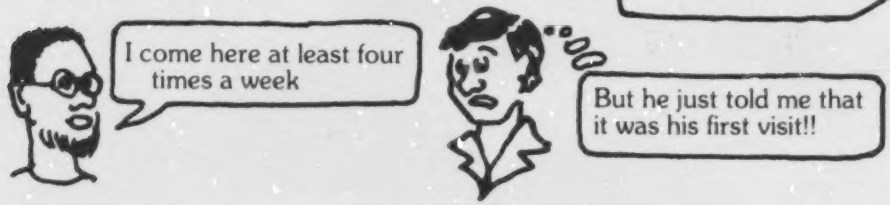
- Do we understand what each other is saying?
  Does the respondent know what I mean?
  Do I know what she means?

- Am I getting useful answers to my questions?


Which of the following amenities would you like to see provided here for shoppers?
• a new bus station
• more seats
• more parking space
• a restaurant



- Are we being honest with each other?



- Are we keeping within our time limits?

'We found that you couldn't entirely rely on people's information as there were contradictions between people's statements.'
Shane, Form V, Mt. Beauty High

'We went out to interview 20 people, but we only got about two returns. The people were not interested. Maybe it could have had something to do with class interest. Some of the kids didn't even bother bringing back the returns. It's up to the people. You can only ask for help.'
Jenny, Form 4, Holbrook High

3 After the interview you will need to decide

- How can I make sense of my findings?

- How can I let other people know what I have found out?

Are all the interviews the same?

- Every interviewer has to think through these questions and different interviewers will go about their jobs in different ways. Three examples of different types of interviews are:

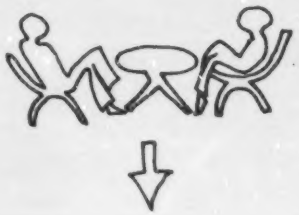
Press conference

Newspaper report

Interviewing striking workers at a meeting

Radio news

Formal studio interview



Scientific report

'Plenty of kids in our class were prepared to come along for the interviews, but when it came to doing the graphs lots of kids just wouldn't co-operate.'
Jenny, Form 4, Holbrook High

- What other types of interviews can you think of?

Methods of questioning

One reason why it is sometimes hard to compare interviews (even when they are about the same topic) is that **different methods of questioning** can be used.

Consider the following types of questioning:

- You might write out a list of questions and ask each person you interview the same questions.

1 Which means of public transport do you prefer?

bus	
train	
tram	
taxi	

2 Why do you prefer that means of transport to others?

_____

- You might have a good idea of what you want to find out, but the way you ask your questions will depend on who you are interviewing.

1 How did you travel to work today?
or
Do you think public transport is satisfactory in this city?

2 If you had to travel by public transport from home to work which means would you choose?

bus	
train	
tram	
taxi	

- You might have a very broad question to start with, and during the interview ask questions which encourage the person to talk about your main topic or question.

1 Why do you think there are so many problems and delays with traffic in the city?

_____

_____

2 Why do you think more people don't travel by public transport?

_____

_____

3

techniques for data analysis

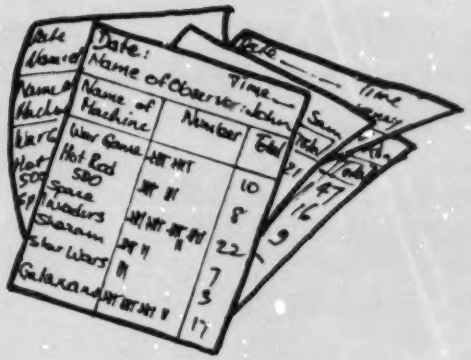
- **Making sense of your findings:**

  Tallied Information

  After a data gathering exercise like the observation described briefly on page 15, in which students collected information about the numbers of people using various slot machines, you would find yourself faced with a mass of tallied information. Your information would take the form of a number of completed tally sheets.

  When all tally sheets had been collected and checked (to make sure that you didn't have two tally sheets for the same time period, or long periods without any tally sheets at all), you would need to draw up a result sheet.

  This should show the total number of observed examples of the behaviour which you were studying. In this case, this would mean the total number of times each slot machine was used by a person below the age of 20 during the total period of observation. The result sheet might look like this.



SLOT MACHINE SURVEY — RESULT SHEET			
Slot Machine	Males	Females	Total
War Game	60	18	78
Hot Rod 500	79	44	123
Space Invaders	13	—	13
Shazam!	21	—	21
Star Wars	147	111	258
Elephant Hunt	58	3	61
Galaxians	95	135	230
Haunted House	3	—	3
Deep Sea Diver	34	19	53
TOTALS (N)	510	330	840

- From this basic data you would be able to prepare other tables of information. For example, it might be useful to know the percentages of people who preferred particular machines.

SLOT MACHINE SURVEY — PERCENTAGES			
Slot Machine	Males	Females	All People
War Game	11.7	5.5	9.3
Hot Rod 500	15.5	13.3	14.6
Space Invaders	2.6	—	1.5
Shazam!	4.1	—	2.5
Star Wars	28.8	33.6	30.7
Elephant Hunt	11.4	.9	7.3
Galaxians	18.6	40.9	27.4
Haunted House	.6	—	.4
Deep Sea Diver	6.7	5.8	6.3
TOTALS	100%	100%	100%
N =	510	330	840

- It might be useful to prepare a table which showed the order of popularity of slot machines.

SLOT MACHINE SURVEY — ORDER OF POPULARITY		
Males	Females	All People
Star Wars	Galaxians	Star Wars
Galaxians	Star Wars	Galaxians
Hot Rod 500	Hot Rod 500	Hot Rod 500
War Game	Deep Sea Diver	War Game
Elephant Hunt	War Game	Elephant Hunt
Deep Sea Diver	Elephant Hunt	Deep Sea Driver
Shazam!	Space Invaders	Shazam!
Space Invaders	Shazam!	Space Invaders
Haunted House	Haunted House	Haunted House

Using the data collected and organized in this way, it would then be possible for you to draw up a report. This could contain each of the tables suggested here, plus any conclusions and recommendations.

Making sense of responses to questions

The committee of students which conducted the **School Uniform Survey** described on page 17 should have finished with 200 completed questionnaires. Their next task would be to try and make some sense of their findings (that is, to **analyse** their data).

In the following examples we look at some of the steps they might have followed.

Step 1 Collect together all the questionnaire sheets. Record the number of responses. (N)

Step 2 Draw up a tally-sheet on which to record the findings.

Survey: School Uniforms	Tally Sheet	N = 200	
Question	Categories	Total Raw Score	%
1 Uniform	Yes No		
2 Level Compulsory	1 2 3 4 5 6		
3 Ever have uniform?	Yes No		
4 Should have?	Yes No		
5 Why should have?			
6 Why should not have?			
7 Form	Junior 1 & 2 Middle 3 & 4 Senior 5 & 6		
8 Name of School	Nellum South High Portside Tech St Michael's Wangon Grammar Wangon Tech		

* The most difficult part of drawing up a tally sheet is the 'categories' column.

For most of the questions in the above example the different answers from which people might choose had been worked out while the questionnaire was being constructed. These included:

- closed questions Nos 1, 3, 4
- multiple choice questions Nos 2, 7, 8

For these, the students counted the number of responses for each 'category' in each question.

Step 3 Look through all the responses to find out whether it is necessary to make new or extra categories for answers to the **structured** questionnaires.

For example, when the students had designed the questionnaire they have provided YES or No as the possible answer to Question 3; yet six people gave 'Don't know' as the answer. The committee therefore had to include an extra category for Question 3.

Step 4 Look through all the responses to the open questions in our example.

- open questions numbers 5 and 6

With open questions there are a variety of responses. Before this information could be recorded on the tally sheet, the responses had to be sorted into groups. Each group included responses which said much the same thing. Each group of responses could be given a heading.

An Example
Below are some sample responses to Question 6 on the questionnaire. Check how they are categorised in the Table.

(a) Our school should get rid of uniforms because they cost so much. Much more than jeans.

(b) I hate uniforms because the collar and everything makes you too hot in summer.

(c) My Dad says that $100 for a uniform is wicked waste, and I agree.

(d) Even the new uniforms make you look like a bag of potatoes.

(e) You feel more ccmfortable in a jumper than a blazer.

(f) Who wants to wear socks and lace-up shoes in the middle of summer?

(g) Nobody wears tartan skirts and green jumpers nowadays if they know anything about fashion.

TABLE

Categories of responses	Examples
More expensive	a, c
Old fashioned — dowdy	d, g
Uncomfortable	b, e, f

Step 5 Complete the tally-sheet by

- filling in the details of the categories column, and
- entering all your results.
- For example:

SURVEY: SCHOOL UNIFORMS	TALLY SHEET	N = 200		
Question	Categories	Total Raw Score		%
1 Uniform?	YES	N=200	120	60
	NO		80	40
2 Level compulsory	1	N=120	120	100
	2		120	100
	3		120	100
	4		120	100
	5		40	33
	6		—	—
3 Ever had uniform?	YES	N=80	56	70
	NO		18	22.5
	DON'T KNOW		6	7.5
4 Should have?	YES	N=200	34	17
	NO		166	83
5 Why should have?	Less expensive	N=34	10	29
	Neater		24	71
6 Why should not have?	More expensive	N=166	28	17
	Old fashioned — dowdy		52	31
	Uncomfortable		86	52
7 Form	Junior 1 & 2	N=200	80	40
	Middle 3 & 4		80	40
	Senior 5 & 6		40	20
8 Name of School	Nellum South High	N=200	40	20
	Portside Tech		40	20
	St Michael's		40	20
	Wangon Grammar		40	20
	Wangon Tech		40	20

Step 6 Report your findings.

- You may wish to write a brief report giving the aim of the survey and its conclusions similar to the example below:

Aim of Survey: **In order to find our whether schools in the local area had abolished uniforms and whether students in those schools thought that schools should have uniforms, a committee of the Students' Representative Council questioned forty students in each of the five schools.**

Findings: **Portside Tech, St Michael's, and Wangon Grammar still had school uniforms. In these three the uniforms were compulsory for forms 1-4 students. In Wangon Grammar uniform was also compulsory for form 5 students. In none of the schools was uniform compulsory for form 6 students.**

Nellum South High, and Wangon Tech do not have school uniforms. Students at Nellum South High all said their school used to have a school uniform, although 24 of the 40 students questioned at Wangon Tech either said their school never had a uniform or they didn't know if it ever had one.

Of the two hundred students interviewed, 166 (83%) said they believed schools should not have a uniform.

data gathering techniques reviewed

Some advantages

OBSERVATION

- You can gather information about a large number of people fairly easily.
- Allows you to gather information about the behaviour of people in a variety of situations.
- Is a way of gathering first hand information i.e. information which has not been interpreted by anyone else.
- We have all used observation before as a means of gathering information and therefore may feel more at ease with this method.
- Can be carried out simply and effectively without interrupting the activities of people being oberved.
- Allows you to find out how people really behave rather than how they say they behave.
- If carried out secretly people will not alter their behaviour because they know they are being observed.

QUESTIONNAIRE

- You can survey the opinions of a large number of people.
- Allows you to gather information about people you cannot see or meet personally.
- Information gathering and analyses is less time consuming than interviews.
- Questionnaires can be designed so that results are easy to compare.

INTERVIEW

- If you and the person being interviewed feel comfortable with each other, then you may ask for quite personal or 'emotional' information (if it is needed!).
- Allows you to alter the way you ask your questions to suit the age or understanding of the respondents.
- Allows you to ask further questions to make sure you get detailed information about people.
- You can ask people to explain or give reasons for their answers.
- No one can accuse you of interviewing them without letting them know!

Some disadvantages

OBSERVATION

- Because we have all used this method before, there is a danger of believing we are better at it than we really are.
- Our eyes and ears are not completely reliable instruments for gathering information.
- You must be on the spot when the behaviour you want to observe is taking place.
- It is easy for people using this method to allow their own prejudices and preferences to influence what they observe and record.
- Does not allow you to find out the reasons for the observed behaviour.
- You have the problem of deciding whether or not you should let the people know their behaviour is being observed.
- If the people do not know they have been observed it may be difficult to get their permission to report your observations. They may be difficult to locate later on. They may object to their behaviour having been observed and recorded.
- If people know they are being observed, their behaviour may change in some way.
- People may object to being observed.
- The use of some methods of recording observed information may interfere with people's normal behaviour. This applies particularly to the use of cameras.

QUESTIONNAIRE

- Unless the questions are well-designed and understood by the people you will not get the information you want.
- To get detailed information, questionnaires sometimes have to be quite long.
- You only get answers to questions which are prepared before meeting the people.
- Depends on people's willingness to answer your questions.

INTERVIEW

- Conducting the interviews takes a lot of time. So does listening to tapes or reading through transcripts of the conversations so you can start to analyse your information.
- Fewer people can be surveyed by interview than by questionnaire.
- You must be able to talk with the person before you can conduct an interview. It may not always be possible to meet each other. You may not speak the same language.
- Depends on the person's willingness to co-operate.
- The interviewer and the interviewee might feel awkward in each others company or they may not trust each other.

  OR

  The person might only say things which he/she thinks the interviewer wants to hear.
- People may feel embarrassed answering questions in front of someone.
- It is hard to compare the answers for different respondents.
- Because you cannot remember what people say, you have to decide how to record their responses.
- The method of recording you use may influence people's willingness to answer your questions e.g. they may not like being tape-recorded.

choosing a data gathering technique

Before you can start your research you will have to decide which social science technique will be the best one to use. (In some research projects more than one technique is used.)

These checklists may help you decide which is the best technique for collecting your information.

1 What kind of information do you want?

If ...

- you want information about people
- you want information about things (e.g. traffic counts)
- you want information about people's behaviour
- you want information about people's beliefs
- you want very detailed information about people's beliefs
- you want general information from or about a lot of people

you could use ...

Obs'n	Q'naire	Interv.

2 Where/who will you get your information from?

If ...

- you want information from a few people
- you want information from a lot of people
- you want information about people who are no longer alive
- you want information about or from people you can't see or meet
- you want information about people you cannot talk to

would be best to use...

Obs'n	Q'naire	Interv.

3 What conditions are you working under? (time, distance, money, equipment, school rules)

If ...

- you have very little time in which to gather information
- you are not able to leave the classroom
- you are too embarrassed to talk with people
- you have no printing equipment or facilities available

you may need to use ...

Obs'n	Q'naire	Interv.

34

some helpful hints

Each research project will differ and could require different decisions and organisations. To avoid situations where some people are sitting around with nothing to do, others are arguing over special equipment, and others are miles ahead on their task, it is very useful for each survey group (or individual) to draw up a Research Proposal. Using the diagram 'Stages in a Social Survey' (p10), an outline of the proposed research can be given, along with details of any special materials and equipment which might be needed.
This will not only help you in your planning, but can also guide you in the various steps as you proceed. Remember, the correct procedure is vitally important if an accurate result is to be obtained.

The teacher is probably the best person to **co-ordinate** all the different research projects. Here are some examples of common problems that have to be solved.

- Two different groups have decided to ask members of their own school staff about how they use their leisure time.
- Four different groups want to use the 'Port-a-pack' Video machine on the same day.
- Two members of a group who want to interview shoppers in the local supermarket have recently been in trouble for visiting the slot machine parlour.
- One group wants to deliver questionnaires to homes in the area, but only two members have bikes, and it would take too long to walk.

Once various individuals or groups have started collecting their information it will be hard for the teacher and students to know which stage everyone is up to with their research and where they can be found. For this reason it is a good idea to have a **Class Planner** on the wall. This could be a summary of the different research projects. For example:

Members of group	Name of research project	Research planning Date | Location	Data collection Date | Location	Data analysis Date | Location	Presentation of results Date | Location

what others have done

During 1975-76 schools in three widely-separated regions undertook studies of their local communities as part of a major project sponsored by the National Committee for Social Science Teaching. Students used a variety of social survey techniques to examine many different topics and issues in their region. The final research reports contained a great deal of valuable information, much of it unique, and much of it was very useful to community bodies such as local councils, tourist and welfare organisations, and the schools themselves. The topics undertaken by schools and groups within schools are listed below and might help you to decide on a problem or issue in your own local area which may be solved by social survey.

Albury Wodonga (New South Wales-Victoria)

The cities of Albury and Wodonga are located on the Murray River, which forms the border between New South Wales and Victoria. Albury-Wodonga and the immediate surrounding district was designated by the Federal Government in 1973 as a growth centre, eventually to contain a total population of 300 000 people. The cities are roughly equidistant (320 kilometres) from Canberra and Melbourne. The main industries of the region are agriculture, service and transport industries.

A profile of the Wodonga and Barandua region prior to major developmental changes	Wodonga Technical School St Augustine's Secondary School
A survey of the needs of junior school leavers	Albury High School
Social division in the Corowa-Rutherglen area	Rutherglen High School and Corowa High School
The Murray River Flood Plain showing the relationships between man and the flood plain	Wodonga High School
Job opportunities for school leavers; the drift of young people away from these towns	Holbrook Central School, St Paul's Secondary School (Walla Walla)
A study of the past and present of Bright township	Bright Higher Elementary School
Environmental study of the Warby Ranges	Wangaratta Technical School
Leisure for youth	Wodonga High School
Inscapes — a series of television programmes focussing on key social issues	Albury North High School
An historic courtyard	Albury North High School
A survey of Wangaratta's present workforce and the aspirations of young people	Wangaratta High School
The role of the school in the community	Tallangatta High School and Corryong High School
Mental health and the community; a study of a mental hospital	Beechworth High School
Educating Myrtleford about education	Myrtleford High School and Marian College
Mt Beauty — the construction era	Mt Beauty High School
Examination of deviant behaviour in Albury-Wodonga	Aquinas College, St Joseph's High School, and Scots School

Albany (Western Australia)

The city of Albany in Western Australia is approximately 350 kilometres to the south-east of Perth. It is the focus for a large rural hinterland. The city's main industries are whaling and timber.

Social science loan cases for secondary schools: specimens accompanied by teaching material and information, prepared largely by students	Albany Residence Museum
Community awareness of specific world problems	Ave Maria College (Albany)
Mr Clarence Nature Trail: a path from the street to the summit of Mt Clarence	Keep Albany Beautiful Society
Local area study to show the way of life on farms and in a country town	Gnowangerup District High School
Town aesthetics: the aesthetic nature of certain parts of Albany, with specific consideration to newly developed areas	Albany Senior High School
Pollution in Albany: present situations and solutions	Albany Senior High School
Investigation of whaling in Albany	Albany Senior High School
Student exchange and a study of comparative advantages and disadvantages of large and small high schools	Albany Senior High School
Case studies of local industries, and the links with pollution and conservation	Albany Senior High School

The production of a booklet about the Kojonup district	Kojonup District School
Assimilation of Christmas Islanders in Katanning	Katanning Senior High School
Examination of sequential occupations in the Denmark area	Denmark Agricultural District High School
History of Mt Barker	Mt Barker Senior High School
Sights and sounds of a rural community — the tyranny of distance	Jerramungup District High School

Wide Bay Region (Queensland)

The Wide Bay region, along the central coast of Queensland, is recognised by the State Government as an administrative region. It lies approximately 350 kilometres north of Brisbane. The principal cities of the region are Maryborough and Bundaberg. The major industries include timber, sugar, and tourism.

Architecture in Maryborough	Aldridge High School (Maryborough)
Study of the local environment with particular reference to Coonunglah Forest	Monto State High School
Decline and survival of a mining town	Gin Gin State High School
The socio-economic effect of the Isis District Resettlement Scheme on Childers	Isis District State High School (Childers)
Provision and usage of tourist facilities	Hervey Bay High School (Pialba)
Rural/urban features and changes in the Maleny area	Maleny State School
Changing patterns of the local rural economy	Goomeri State School
Survey into the cultural heritage of the Gayndah district with regard to the Aboriginal contribution	Gayndah State High School
Study of land use from early times to present day through oral recording techniques	Noosa District High School
Changing patterns of High School (Childers)	Bundaberg State High School
Work experience programme for girls	St Patrick's Convent High School (Bundaberg)
An historical and geographical study of Murgon and Cherbourg	Murgon State High School
The effect in Kingaroy of changes in primary industry	Kingaroy State High School
The impact of the timber industry in the Gympie District	Gympie State High School
Community library	Bundaberg North High School

other useful publications

W.F. Connell, C.H. Koopman, and C.A. Hoban, **Studying the Local Community**, George Allen & Unwin (Aust), 1978.

SEMP (W.A.), **Finding Out**, Curriculum Development Centre, 1977.

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SEMP (W.A.), **Community Growth**, Curriculum Development Centre, 1977.

SEMP (Vic), **People & The City**, Heinneman Educational, Australia, 1978.

L. Donovan, A. King, and G. Spencer, **Look Again — social education for junior secondary students**, Lloyd O'Neil Pty Ltd, Windsor, 1978.

A. Davison, M. Rowland, and M. Sherry, **Strategies and Methods — a guide for teachers of consumer education and the social sciences**, V.C.T.A., 1977.

Using Community Resources — report on Albury-Wodonga regional conference 1975, N.C.S.S.T., Canberra, 1976.